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Chairman: Mr. Bródi ..... (Hungary)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Ms. McLurg

Contents

Agenda item 123: Human resources management

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 123: Human resources management
(A/61/206, A/61/694 and Add.1, A/61/806 and Add.1, A/61/822, A/61/823, A/61/957 and A/61/1029; A/62/7/Add.14, A/62/185, A/62/186, A/62/215, A/62/285, A/62/315, A/62/628 and Add.1, A/62/707 and Add.1, A/62/845 and Add.1 and A/62/890; A/C.5/62/L.9; A/63/132, A/63/189, A/63/202, A/63/204, A/63/208, A/63/221, A/63/282, A/63/285, A/63/290, A/63/298, A/63/301, A/63/310 and Add.1-3 and A/63/526; A/C.5/63/3 and Add.1 and 2)

1. **Ms. Kane** (Under-Secretary-General for Management), delivering a statement on behalf of the Deputy Secretary-General, said that management reform was at the top of the Secretary-General's agenda. One of the cornerstones of that reform was the manner in which staff were employed, nurtured, managed and utilized. Only with a new and more modern human resources framework could the United Nations become more effective, flexible and accountable.

2. As the Secretary-General had stated at the opening of the current session, the time had come to invest more in the staff. Nearly 60 per cent of Secretariat staff worked in the field, yet current frameworks for human resources management had been designed for a largely stable, Headquarters-based environment. They needed to be adapted to accommodate dynamic field-based operations.

3. The proposals before the Committee related to the streamlining of United Nations contracts, the introduction of a roster-based approach to recruitment and the harmonization of conditions of service for Secretariat staff with those of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. The reforms were interrelated and aimed at enabling the Organization to respond better to increasingly complex mandates, including in peacekeeping and other field-based operations. They would lead to simpler processes and greater transparency, facilitate mobility and bring about more equitable treatment of staff. They would also help to build a truly global and integrated Secretariat that was responsive to the needs of the Organization and more able to fulfil the mandates given by Member States.

4. The streamlining of contractual arrangements, which had been under discussion for several years, was a critical reform that would result in a simplified regime under one set of staff rules. There would be three types of appointment: temporary, fixed-term and continuing. As at 30 June 2008, the United Nations Secretariat had had almost 40,000 staff members, nearly 60 per cent of whom worked in peacekeeping operations and special political missions. The current contractual arrangements and inferior or disparate conditions of service did not serve staff well and hampered the Organization's ability to attract, recruit, manage and retain staff, particularly in the field. The introduction of one staff contract, under one series of staff rules, would offer career prospects for staff in all locations without restricting them to specific offices or projects, and was essential for building a mobile and versatile workforce.

5. However, the streamlining of contractual arrangements was not enough in and of itself. It was also necessary to harmonize conditions of service. A consistent, common system of salaries, allowances and benefits was critical for enabling staff to move between duty stations in the field, between Headquarters and the field, and between United Nations organizations. The harmonization of conditions of service would also facilitate a more integrated approach to managing staff and would make it easier to match their talents with the corresponding tasks while developing effective, experienced, multi-skilled individuals who felt that their contributions were rewarded.

6. It was also necessary to reduce the amount of time taken to recruit staff. The General Assembly was being asked to approve a roster-based approach that would allow a slate of qualified candidates in a specific occupational group to be pre-approved, so that it would not be necessary to advertise every post individually. Greater reliance on rosters, where possible, would speed up the recruitment process and make it more efficient. Approval was also sought for a reduction in the period of circulation of specific vacancy announcements from 60 days to 30 days.

7. She hoped that the adoption of General Assembly resolution 62/248 on human resources management and the willingness of Member States to consider the proposals as a matter of urgency would lead to favourable outcomes at the current session. The Secretariat hoped to implement the revised arrangements on 1 July 2009.

8. The Secretary-General shared Member States' desire to build a modern, transparent and results-driven Organization with a highly professional and multi-tasking workforce. In order to achieve that aim, a new human resources framework was essential.

9. Speaking on her own behalf and introducing the various reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management, she said that the Office of Human Resources Management was the epicentre of reform in that area. Given the Organization's evolving operational requirements, the Office was becoming more strategic and proactive, as noted in the Secretary-General's reports on human resources management reform (A/63/282) and on measures taken to address seven systemic human resources issues raised in the context of the reform of the internal system of administration of justice (A/63/132).

10. The Office continued to help the Organization to align its human resources capacity with emerging challenges and to support the establishment of new entities; to develop and maintain the human resources management infrastructure through policy development and information technology; to build capacity to help managers to manage and staff to function to the best of their ability, and to monitor performance; to introduce and share new ideas and good practices in human resources management; to advocate in matters relating to conditions of service and security, including in such areas as work-life issues, staff development and career opportunities; and to provide advice and administrative services to departments and offices, managers and the staff at large.

11. The report on human resources management reform (A/63/282) outlined the significant progress that had been made in adapting the human resources framework to meet the increasingly operational needs of the Organization. Nonetheless, some critical aspects of the reform needed to be addressed at the current session.

12. The key areas of importance with regard to human resources were set out in three reports in particular: the detailed proposals for streamlining United Nations contractual arrangements (A/63/298), the report on amendments to the Staff Regulations (A/63/189) and the report on recruitment and staffing in the United Nations (A/63/285), which focused on the roster-based approach to staffing. The reform initiatives outlined in those reports would provide the Organization with the required agility to build and sustain an increasingly operational and client-oriented United Nations, with streamlined processes that responded to the complex mandates required in the modern world. The reports had been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 62/248, in which the Assembly had indicated that it would continue consideration of the issue of contractual arrangements and conditions of service at the main part of its sixty-third session. They built on the Secretary-General's previous proposals and included detailed information on the proposed establishment of one series of staff rules based on the existing 100 series, one contract encompassing three types of appointment, and measures to harmonize conditions of service, including for staff in the field.

13. The report on recruitment and staffing (A/63/285) had been submitted pursuant to the General Assembly's request, in its resolution 61/244, that the Secretary-General should further elaborate the use of pre-screened rosters. The report provided information on progress made in advancing the reform proposals presented in the Secretary-General's reports on investing in people (A/61/255) and on recruitment and staffing (A/61/822). The concept of pre-screened rosters was based on strategic workforce planning, the use of generic vacancy announcements, the creation of expert groups in the various occupational groups, the use of central review bodies throughout the Secretariat and an upstreamed clearance process.

14. She welcomed the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the review of the national competitive recruitment examination as a recruitment tool (A/62/707/Add.1). The Organization had already implemented some recommendations that did not require the General Assembly's approval. For instance, a new administrative instruction regulating the national competitive examination process had been drafted. The Office of Human Resources Management had already identified the occupational groups and Member States for the 2009 national competitive examinations through the process of strategic workforce planning. Other recommendations were dependent on external factors. For example, the shortening of the examination cycle would require financial resources in order to speed up marking, and national competitive examinations roster management would be addressed in the new talent management system. The possibility of sharing the

roster with other United Nations organizations was also being explored.

15. Another key area of focus was the mobility policy. As requested by the General Assembly in resolution 61/244, the report on that topic (A/63/208) described the continued progress in the area of mobility, along with projections for the envisaged remaining phases and an assessment of the relevant administrative and management issues, together with observations and recommendations on the way forward. Operating under one series of staff rules would strengthen mobility by increasing the Organization's flexibility and responsiveness and improving its programme delivery capacity and ability to address the many facets of its work through greater integration.

16. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on staff mobility in the United Nations (A/61/806) and the note by the Secretary-General thereon (A/61/806/Add.1) also recognized the importance of mobility. The aim was to facilitate mobility of staff within the United Nations common system, which current policies did not permit. Inter-agency mobility was further impacted by unequal conditions of service: the funds and programmes offered better compensation packages that also improved work-life balance at non-family duty stations.

17. Turning to the human resources management reports that were submitted to the Assembly on a regular basis, she said that the reports of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/63/310), on gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities (A/63/310/Add.1), on employment of retirees (A/63/310/Add.2) and on consultants and individual contractors (A/63/310/Add.3) provided an analysis of the workforce of the global Secretariat that reflected trends over the period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008.

18. The report on the practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and possible criminal behaviour, 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008 (A/63/202), contained information on all actions taken in cases of established misconduct and/or criminal behaviour and the disciplinary action and, where appropriate, legal action taken in accordance with the established procedures and regulations. It also provided a broad overview of the administrative machinery for disciplinary matters, a summary of the cases in which a disciplinary measure had been imposed by the Secretary-General and statistics on the disposition of all cases that had been closed during the reporting period.

19. The report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (A/62/890) set out data on allegations of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse within the United Nations system during the period from January to December 2007 and the status of investigations into those allegations.

20. The Committee also had before it five reports relating to the staffing of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the measures that had been taken in cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management to address the perceived geographical imbalance at OHCHR (A/61/823, A/62/845 and Add.1, A/63/204 and A/63/290). The Joint Inspection Unit report on the subject (A/62/845) took note of the recent improvements in the composition of OHCHR but maintained that there was still a serious, albeit not quantified, geographical imbalance. The Secretary-General's note on the Unit's report (A/62/845/Add.1) pointed out the inconsistencies in terminology and methodology that had contributed to the misperceptions surrounding the issue. The Department of Management remained committed to further improving geographical diversity among OHCHR staff, in accordance with the desirable ranges mandated by the General Assembly.

21. Member States' approval of key initiatives at the current session would greatly enhance the work of the Office of Human Resources Management. A number of successes had already been achieved in recent months. A revised Secretary-General's bulletin promulgated in August 2008 strengthened the role of the departmental focal points for women. New outreach capacity had been established in the Office of Human Resources Management in order to attract the highest-calibre staff and to address upcoming retirements. With regard to performance management, the Secretary-General had entered into compacts with his senior managers providing for specific and measurable results to be delivered within a year.

22. The time taken to fill vacancies had been reduced to 162 days; the aim was to reduce it further to 100 calendar days. On strategic workforce planning, a pilot programme was under way with regard to staffing

and career development plans. With regard to the talent management system, a new information technology tool was being implemented in support of the reform initiatives, in collaboration with the main stakeholders in the field and within the Office of Human Resources Management, in order to link workforce planning with performance management and to streamline business processes.

23. With regard to learning and career development, requirements for an information technology tool to support learning management had been formulated, and a learning advisory board would be established at a senior level to ensure that learning was aligned with the Organization's goals and priorities. Lastly, consultations on several recommendations had been held with staff at the June 2008 session of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee, which had reaffirmed its support for the Secretary-General's proposals on streamlining contracts and harmonizing conditions of service and had noted the various recommendations on improving the staff selection system, performance management and mobility.

24. **Ms. Malcorra** (Under-Secretary-General for Field Support) said that the Organization did not focus enough on the 60 per cent of its staff who worked in the field and the conditions in which they worked. The three main human resources reform proposals, namely the streamlining of contracts, the harmonization of conditions of service and roster-based recruitment, would have a huge impact on those staff. There were currently 11 different types of contract with 15 different sets of conditions of service, which led to unequal treatment, high turnover rates, excessive cost and complexity in administration and built-in obstacles to mobility, reflected in high vacancy rates in field missions. In addition, field staff had few opportunities for career development.

25. Some 88 per cent of international peacekeeping staff had contracts of one year or less, although the average duration of service for civilian staff in peacekeeping missions was nearly five years. The turnover rate among Professional staff ranged from 22 to 30 per cent per year and more than half of Professionals had less than two years' experience in the field. Many peacekeepers had more than a decade of field experience acquired under a series of short-term contracts.

26. In March 2008, her predecessor had addressed the Committee on the changing nature of peacekeeping missions, which were increasingly complex and diverse. In addition, the number of start-up and hybrid operations was increasing and new integrated missions were being established with new sets of requirements. It was therefore becoming more and more difficult to find and retain the right staff. There was a critical need for reform, and she appealed to the Committee for advice and support.

27. The situation on the ground was deteriorating and the number of missions, mandates and personnel demands continued to grow. With the addition of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), field staff requirements had increased by nearly 20 per cent in 2008. The Professional staff vacancy rate had increased to 38 per cent, although the overall vacancy rate had fallen to 27 per cent.

28. Selection processes were cumbersome and inefficient. Many job offers were rejected by the selected candidates and the number of new recruits had fallen. One quarter of selections actually related to lateral movements of staff, as a direct consequence of the "mission-specific" contracts currently used. Moreover, a recent Office of Human Resources Management survey had indicated that alternative job opportunities and family concerns were factors behind nearly half of all separations. At the same time, nearly 70 per cent of those who left their jobs remained within the United Nations common system. It seemed that people were using peacekeeping as a means of entry before moving on to better opportunities. The reforms proposed by the Secretary-General would help to address those problems. In particular, as part of the harmonization of conditions of service, there would be an effort to achieve consistency in the designation of missions, a special operations approach would be introduced for non-family duty stations and the occasional recuperation break would be replaced with paid rest and recuperation travel. Roster-based recruitment would include the use of pre-cleared candidates and strategic workforce planning.

29. Behind all the facts and figures lay real human stories. For example, dedicated staff members who had given long years of service at difficult duty stations, sacrificing family life and personal security, had few career prospects, no commitment from the

Organization beyond the end of the current contract, and a compensation package significantly inferior to that of colleagues in the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. Highly qualified individuals recruited for specific mission vacancies who performed well over several years were required to go through protracted recruitment processes for equivalent vacancies in different missions, even if they had already proved their ability in the relevant areas. Conversely, an administrator might spend a great deal of time on recruitment and selection processes at the end of which the selected candidates either refused the offers made or left after a limited period with the Organization. In the meantime, the number of unprocessed applications would continue to grow.

30. It was difficult to require field staff to perform at the necessary level of excellence when they were given no long-term opportunities, no sense of belonging and no career prospects within the Organization. They deserved better, and action must be taken on their behalf.

31. **Mr. Benson** (Director, Ethics Office), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Ethics Office (A/62/285 and A/63/301), said that they had been submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/254; the first covered the period 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007 and the second covered the period 1 August 2007 to 31 July 2008. The reports set out the results achieved in each reporting cycle in relation to the Office's mandated responsibilities, which included the development of ethics-related standards; training, education and outreach; provision of confidential advice and guidance to staff on ethics-related issues; administration of the financial disclosure programme; and administration of the policy on protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits.

32. The Ethics Office had undertaken significant work on developing and clarifying ethics policies and standards. As indicated in the 2007 report, it had worked on the Secretary-General's bulletin on post-employment restrictions (ST/SGB/2006/15), which applied to staff members participating in the procurement process, and, in conjunction with the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of Legal Affairs, it had produced the booklet entitled "Working together: putting ethics to work". It had also started work on a system-wide code of ethics, pursuant to the General Assembly's request in the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

33. As indicated in the 2008 report, the newly established United Nations Ethics Committee had finalized the draft code of ethics and had also provided substantive support for the development of the Secretary-General's bulletin on the system-wide application of ethics in the separately administered organs and programmes (ST/SGB/2007/11). Following the Secretary-General's approval of the voluntary public disclosure policy in December 2007, the Ethics Office had implemented the policy in respect of senior managers at the Under-Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General levels.

34. With regard to training, education and outreach, some 5,000 staff members had attended a half-day workshop entitled "Working together: professional ethics and integrity in our daily work" during the two reporting cycles. The workshop had been offered not only at Headquarters but also in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi and at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). In addition, the mandatory online learning programme on integrity awareness had been completed since its inception in 2005 by approximately 12,000 staff members, including more than 2,000 in the period covered by the 2008 report.

35. A customized workshop entitled "Ethics and integrity in procurement" had been launched in 2007 and almost 400 staff at Headquarters had participated in it. The workshop had also been piloted at the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

36. During the period covered by the 2007 report, the Ethics Office had produced the brochures entitled "Introduction to the Ethics Office", "Financial Disclosure Programme", "Protection against Retaliation" and "Conflicts of Interest". During both reporting periods, it had provided briefings in the context of other training activities such as the orientation programme for new staff members and the senior mission administration and resource training (SMART) programme of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

37. The Ethics Office provided confidential advice regarding any potential conflicts of interest in order to ensure that staff members acted in the best interests of the United Nations in the performance of their official duties. The advice provided generally fell within the broad categories of employment-related concerns, gifts and hospitality, personal investments and assets, and outside activities and post-employment restrictions. There had been a 100-per-cent increase in requests for advice between the first and second reporting periods, probably because the training courses provided had increased awareness of ethics issues and because both management and staff recognized the value added by seeking advice.

38. The purpose of the financial disclosure programme was to ensure that any potential conflicts of interest arising from staff members' financial holdings, private affiliations or outside activities could be identified in advance with a view to providing advice as to how to manage the situation in the best interest of the United Nations. The confidential review of staff members' disclosure statements was currently undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers. For the last two years, staff had been required to file their statements online. The number of participants had increased steadily since the programme's inception in 2006 to reach more than 3,000 in 2008. The new participants came from a number of United Nations bodies and agencies other than the Secretariat and from peacekeeping operations.

39. Although the number of participants failing to file statements had increased between 2006, when the system had been paper-based, and 2007, when it had become entirely paperless, the number had decreased again in the 2008 filing cycle. PricewaterhouseCoopers had reported an increase in staff acceptance of the programme and a decrease in the number of staff members who had initially filed a blank or incomplete statement.

40. The Secretariat's policy on protection against retaliation had entered into force in January 2006. The Ethics Office had considered 52 complaints of retaliation during the period August 2006 to July 2007 and 45 during the subsequent reporting period. Although the total number of cases had fallen slightly, the percentage of cases found to fall within the ambit of the policy had increased. Lastly, the 2008 report indicated that the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) had completed its investigation into the two cases referred to it in the previous reporting period and had found that the evidence did not establish that retaliation had occurred.

41. The United Nations Ethics Committee, which had been established on 1 December 2007, comprised eight entities: the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Secretariat. The Committee's main responsibilities were to establish a unified set of ethical standards and policies, to consult on important and complex cases and issues with implications for the United Nations system as a whole and to ensure the coherent application of ethical standards in member organizations. The Director of the United Nations Ethics Office chaired the Ethics Committee and, upon request, reviewed requests for protection against retaliation submitted by staff of funds or programmes in cases where the fund's or programme's Ethics Office had made a final determination or where the request had not been formally considered within 45 days of its submission.

42. The Ethics Committee had set priorities and enhanced policy coordination in its four main areas of responsibility: standard-setting, financial disclosure, protection against retaliation and ethics training. The Committee had prepared a draft code of ethics that would be finalized and implemented after completion of a system-wide consultation, which was currently under way. The Committee was also performing a comprehensive review of protection against retaliation policies in the funds and programmes, with a view to harmonizing standards, and was coordinating ethics training those entities to ensure consistency.

43. In response to the request for a comprehensive review of ethics-related activities in the Secretariat made by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in its report on the 2005 World Summit Outcome (A/60/7/Add.13 and Corr.1 and 2), the Ethics Office had conducted a survey of departments and offices regarding rules, guidelines or training that had been developed to inform staff members how to discharge their duties while ensuring that they, their family members and associated third parties did not benefit or appear to benefit from their

decisions, influence or access to information. The survey had revealed that the values set out in the Charter, the Staff Regulations and Rules and the Standards of Conduct of the International Civil Service remained the principal sources of guidance; that some departments had developed specific regulations and training in response to occupational needs; and that publications, training material and focal points did not overlap with or replace the activities of the Ethics Office, but served as supplemental sources of guidance and easy reference. Overall, the Secretary-General was of the view that the supplemental regulations and training enhanced ethics activities within the Secretariat. More time was needed to assess the impact of those activities and to explore the possibility of redeploying resources.

44. Responding to some of the observations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/63/526) regarding the Secretary-General's reports on the activities of the Ethics Office, he pointed out that the Ethics Office had been working proactively — through briefings, regular staff training, ethics training and other channels — to clarify its mandates and functions to staff members. As a result, the number of requests for services that fell outside the Office's mandate had declined. Furthermore, the Ethics Office had worked closely with the Office of Human Resources Management to update the contents of ethics training and to mainstream it into regular staff training, to ensure that ethics training was coordinated and addressed the specific needs of different groups of staff and missions.

45. Lastly, with regard to inter-agency cooperation in matters of ethics, the Secretary-General had undertaken measures to improve coordination and harmonization within the framework of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). Such measures included the issuance of a bulletin on the system-wide application of ethics in the separately administered organs and programmes (ST/SGB/2007/11) and the draft code of ethics for United Nations personnel. Fostering a culture of ethics and integrity within the Organization served to enhance its credibility and remained a priority of the Secretariat.

46. **Ms. Ahlenius** (Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services), introducing the OIOS report on the in-depth evaluation of the Office of Human Resources Management (A/63/221), said that the Office of Human Resources Management faced significant challenges as the central authority responsible for three main functions: performing strategic human resources planning and policy development, delegating human resources authority throughout the Secretariat and directly providing many human resources services. As a result, key objectives were not being achieved. The Office had limited resources for policy development and the provision of interpretative guidance. With the current level of resources, the lack of clear prioritization of human resources initiatives and the absence of fully transparent policies for Secretariat management and staff, the Office faced a challenge in meeting its mandate. The resulting workload was affecting its staff and others throughout the Secretariat who performed human resources management functions.

47. OIOS commended the Office of Human Resources Management for its current efforts to lead the Secretariat towards highly effective human resources management in an environment of multifaceted challenges, complex interrelationships and an ambitious reform agenda. It had concluded, nevertheless, that the desired results had not been fully achieved. For example, despite improvements, lengthy staff selection time frames were still perceived to have a negative effect on the ability of programmes to achieve their mandates. The staff selection process also lacked full credibility. Furthermore, the mobility programme initiative had not yielded the desired results and an integrated approach to staff career development was lacking. Improvements were also needed to strengthen human resources planning, policy development and interpretative guidance, and instructions on delegation of authority. More clarity was required regarding the decision-making authority of programmes versus that of the Office of Human Resources Management. Moreover, the very limited monitoring of entities to which authority had been delegated posed significant risks to the Organization.

48. While there were no simple solutions to the human resources management challenges faced by the Office of Human Resources Management and the Organization as a whole, OIOS had made five recommendations: the Office of Human Resources Management should develop an integrated framework to enhance the staff selection process, provide better support for career development and promote staff mobility; strengthen policy development and corresponding interpretative guidance; prioritize the

implementation of human resources reform initiatives; clarify and streamline the delegation of authority; and strengthen monitoring.

49. **Mr. Fontaine Ortiz** (Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit) introduced the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the implementation of headquarters agreements concluded by United Nations system organizations (A/61/694), noting that it highlighted the need to foster good relations with host countries and establish proper forums for dialogue. It recommended the establishment of mechanisms to ensure funding for major repairs, reiterated the importance of the timely issuance of visas for staff travelling on United Nations business and reviewed security issues in the context of the headquarters minimum operating security standards.

50. The organizations had welcomed the report's findings and recommendations and recognized the need for periodic reviews of host country agreements. In particular, they agreed with the recommendation that the legislative bodies of United Nations system organizations that bore all or part of the cost of major repairs and refurbishments of their premises should establish a special fund to ensure adequate financial resources for such expenditures in their regular budgets.

51. Introducing the Unit's report on staff mobility in the United Nations (A/61/806), he emphasized that a mobility policy was an essential management tool for an organization such as the United Nations. The Secretariat had not, however, properly addressed the major challenges to the implementation of that policy. Shortcomings included the lack of an Organization-wide culture of mobility; the lack of a comprehensive strategic mobility plan with quantified objectives identifying, inter alia, the locations targeted, the type and volume of staff movement and associated indicators to measure progress; the lack of mechanisms for knowledge management and knowledge sharing to prevent the potential loss of institutional memory due to increased mobility; the lack of a clear analysis of the Organization's needs and an inventory of staff skills and competencies at each location; and the lack of effective measures to improve work-life conditions at some duty stations, which hindered implementation of the mobility policy. In addition, further consultations between management and staff were required.

52. The Unit had therefore recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to resolve the challenges identified in its report before further implementing the fourth phase of the mobility policy so as to better equip the Organization for full implementation of mobility in the near future, and to report to the General Assembly on the progress made in that regard.

53. While the Unit welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to suspend the current mobility format and to undertake a comprehensive review of the policy with all stakeholders, it noted that, had its recommendation been accepted in due time, two years of a futile exercise could have been saved. It regretted that the review would be done only after the final exercise had been completed for staff at the D-1 and D-2 levels. As the previous exercise had not worked, there was no justification for continuing. Moreover, he understood that the Secretary-General was introducing new modalities of mandatory mobility between duty stations.

54. A clear understanding of the main purpose of the mobility policy was still lacking. The Secretary-General had not sufficiently highlighted that mobility should be a management tool to meet the short-, medium- and long-term needs of the Organization. A succession plan, based on an inventory of needs and skills, was a prerequisite for launching a new mobility exercise.

55. There were three types of mobility: mandatory, voluntary and managed. Managed mobility was the best option for the United Nations because it protected the interests of both the Organization and its staff members. In his most recent report on mobility (A/63/208), the Secretary-General described the current mobility policy as managed. That term was misleading because the introduction of time limits for post occupancy had made the current policy mandatory.

56. Managed mobility implied the existence of a clear, concrete strategy to meet the needs and skill requirements of the Organization using mobility as a fundamental management tool and as part of a staff career development plan. Each movement of staff should be accompanied by a clear statement of its purpose (i.e., the benefits for the Organization and the staff concerned) and the implications for the staff member's career development.

57. The Secretary-General's report was silent on the financial implications of a sound mobility policy; that was indicative of a regrettable lack of connection between human resources policies and budget policies.

58. The Unit's report on the age structure of human resources in the organizations of the United Nations system (A/62/628) assessed the age structure of staff in that system, the overall implications of staff ageing in general and its impact on human resources management policies. Although there were significant differences between the demographic profiles of different United Nations organizations, in general the average age of staff was high compared to that found in national governmental institutions, international organizations or multinational private companies. The age of entry on duty was also relatively high: the grade structure and the related regulations and recruitment practices hindered the entry of young people into United Nations organizations. At the same time, the retirement age was comparatively low, and the rules and regulations on mandatory separation — which was strongly linked to the normal retirement age — were insufficiently flexible. The United Nations organizations would soon face a wave of retirements among senior managers, and the low retirement age and associated rules and regulations might unnecessarily prevent organizations from making the maximum use of experienced human resources.

59. The report also highlighted the need to recruit and retain young professionals through an improved grade structure, proposed proactive succession planning that went beyond merely filling vacancies and called for the CEB Human Resources Network to be more actively involved in the matter.

60. He drew the Committee's attention to one recommendation in particular: that regulations on the mandatory age of separation and the normal retirement age in United Nations organizations should be reviewed. Changes in national and international labour markets and national pension systems, the increase in life expectancy and the more efficient use of human resources in the United Nations system justified such a review. Because of the complexity and long-term impact of pension regulations, elaborating and examining proposed changes would take time. The General Assembly might therefore wish to initiate the recommended work on succession planning.

61. The objective of the Unit's report on the funding and staffing of OHCHR (A/62/845) was to help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of OHCHR by recommending adequate mechanisms for involving Member States in the review of the draft programme of work and of associated financial requirements, in light of the priorities established by the Human Rights Council, and for monitoring the use of funds and the implementation of the programme of work, and by recommending measures to redress the imbalance in the geographic distribution of OHCHR staff at the Professional level and above.

62. The report contained eight recommendations requesting OHCHR to adopt a results-based management approach to the budget and planning process; to seek the views of the Human Rights Council in preparing the proposed strategic framework and associated financial requirements for human rights activities; to establish a reasonable balance between the regular budget of OHCHR and voluntary contributions; to set up a board of trustees for the Trust Fund for Support of the Activities of the Centre for Human Rights (which had accounted for 80 per cent of the Office's extrabudgetary resources in 2006); and to increase efforts to broaden the donor base and reduce earmarked funds. To address the persistent imbalance in the geographic distribution of Professional staff, the General Assembly was urged to introduce a temporary maximum level for the recruitment of new Professional staff from overrepresented regions.

63. Although it was a matter of concern that human rights activities, one of the core mandates of the United Nations, were increasingly dependent on voluntary contributions and that there had been no significant improvement in geographic distribution, some progress had nevertheless been made through the partial implementation by OHCHR of the recommendations mentioned. The Joint Inspection Unit encouraged follow-up and further implementation.

64. The Unit's report on its review of the national competitive recruitment examination as a recruitment tool (A/62/707) assessed the system at the examination and recruitment stages, including its rules and regulations, operation, effectiveness and cost efficiency, and its impact on the Organization's recruitment results. The report acknowledged the positive role of the examinations in providing the United Nations Secretariat with highly qualified Professional staff and improving the gender and

geographical balance. Although the examinations' administration had been free of fraud and mismanagement over the previous decades, the report had identified certain weaknesses and formulated recommendations to address them.

65. The Secretary-General, in his note A/62/707/Add.1, had concurred with the recommendations made and had expressed an explicit intention to implement them. He had also stated that additional resources would be needed to implement the recommendation on shortening the examination process. The Unit felt that such resources should be requested, planned and budgeted for within the framework of the programme budget. The General Assembly might wish to consider such a proposal favourably.

66. The Unit had also recommended closer cooperation on examination and roster management among the United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies. More active cooperation within the framework of CEB and its Human Resources Network might result in better utilization of successful candidates for the benefit of the United Nations system and would yield savings in human and financial resources.

67. In conclusion, he said that the Unit took pains to prepare its reports on time, and emphasized that delays in the introduction of those reports and in the subsequent implementation of the recommendations they contained could render them a mere academic exercise due to changes in conditions, procedures, technologies and the requirements of the target audience.

68. **Mr. Herman** (Senior Adviser on Information Management Policy Coordination, United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination), introducing the note by the Secretary-General conveying his comments and those of CEB members on the Joint Inspection Unit's report on the implementation of headquarters agreements (A/61/694/Add.1), said that headquarters agreements formed the cornerstone of an agency's relationship with the Government that hosted it. As noted in the Unit's report (A/61/694), such agreements did not vary greatly across the system and agencies were generally content with the agreements currently in place. Agencies had indicated that they maintained a straightforward dialogue with their host countries on issues that arose and in many cases received excellent, and sometimes generous, services.

69. The organizations of the system had accepted most of the Unit's recommendations, many of which were already being implemented. Even so, some recommendations had elicited a range of opinions. For example, some duty stations with multiple organizations had found that the joint forums recommended for interacting with host countries were useful, while others, after studying that approach, had determined that such bodies would add little value.

70. The recommendations directed at enhancing staff safety and security had been of particular interest. Organizations had noted, in particular, the need for the Department of Safety and Security to develop a comprehensive minimum operating security standards framework for category H duty stations.

71. Introducing the note by the Secretary-General conveying his comments and those of CEB members on the Joint Inspection Unit's report on the age structure of human resources (A/62/628/Add.1), he said that organizations had appreciated the comprehensive nature of the Unit's report (A/62/628), which focused on an issue of increasing importance across the system, and had generally agreed with its recommendations.

72. Many organizations had indicated that the measures proposed in the recommendations had already been implemented or were currently under consideration. For example, many of them already collected detailed demographic data on staffing and had policies in place that emphasized competency, proficiency and other qualifications (such as education) over years of experience in the consideration of candidates for all posts. However, agencies had noted that the recommendation calling for a review of the mandatory retirement age could have funding implications and would adversely affect the age distribution proposed in other recommendations of the report. Overall, organizations had welcomed the two reports as valuable contributions to the discussion of human resources issues throughout the system.

73. **Ms. McLurg** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee (A/63/526) on 13 human resources management reports submitted by the Secretary-General, said that the comments and recommendations

contained therein should be read together with those made by the Advisory Committee at the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, as set out in its report on human resources management (A/62/7/Add.14).

74. With regard to the Secretary-General's overview report on human resources management reform (A/63/282), the Advisory Committee's comments and recommendations focused on the areas of human resources planning and monitoring; career development and support; strengthening of leadership and management capacity; performance management; human resources information technology; health-care services; and staff-management relations.

75. In general terms, the Advisory Committee wished to emphasize the fundamental importance of human resources management reform in the context of efforts to strengthen the international civil service. Noting in particular the work done by the Task Force on Human Resources Management and the Task Force to Simplify and Streamline the Rules of Work Processes, it encouraged the Secretary-General to update the General Assembly on that work in his next report on human resources management.

76. In its report (A/63/526), the Advisory Committee emphasized the importance of a phased and prioritized approach to the implementation of reform measures and expressed its concern about the tendency of the Office of Human Resources Management to embark upon new reform initiatives without first having evaluated the effects of those previously implemented. It appreciated the Office's efforts to respond to the evolving human resources needs of the United Nations; however, the Office should consider whether it had sufficient capacity to implement so many measures simultaneously and the Secretary-General should ensure that future reform proposals were accompanied by a comprehensive results and impact assessment of earlier reforms and existing arrangements.

77. The Secretary-General's report on human resources management reform (A/63/282) did not set out the financial implications of the measures envisaged, without which it would be difficult for the Assembly to form its views on the new measures proposed. The Secretary-General should therefore provide the Assembly with an indication of the financial and other administrative implications of his proposals.

78. On the Secretary-General's proposals for the streamlining of contractual arrangements (A/63/298), the Advisory Committee had confined its comments and recommendations to those issues that it regarded as outstanding, i.e. procedures for granting and terminating continuing appointments; the eligibility of staff recruited through the national competitive examination for consideration for continuing appointments; the establishment of a ceiling on the number of conversions to continuing appointments; and termination payments. While the Advisory Committee noted the Secretary-General's efforts to respond to its requests for additional information on internal procedures for granting and terminating continuing appointments, it considered that further clarification of both procedures was required. On the proposal that staff members recruited through the national competitive examination should be considered for continuing appointments after two rather than five years' service, the Advisory Committee concurred with the Secretary-General that it was important to avoid creating different categories of staff with different thresholds for consideration for a continuing appointment and therefore recommended that all staff, regardless of the mode of recruitment, should be eligible for such consideration after five years' continuous service. It also recommended against the establishment of a ceiling on the number of annual conversions to continuing appointments. However, it reiterated the need for a prudent approach to conversions and highlighted the importance of protecting the acquired rights of staff who would be eligible for consideration for a permanent appointment by the time the new arrangements came into effect. The Advisory Committee had sought clarification regarding the number of such staff and called for that information to be provided to the General Assembly, bearing in mind that many staff members other than those appointed under the 100 series of the Staff Regulations and Rules might have accrued five years' continuous service by 1 July 2009. On the issue of an end-of-service grant for staff holding fixed-term appointments, the Advisory Committee recommended deferring a decision until the International Civil Service Commission had concluded its deliberations on the matter.

79. With regard to the mobility policy, the Advisory Committee, in view of the difficulties seen in the initial implementation of the managed reassignment programmes, supported the Secretary-General's

intention to suspend the programmes in their current format after the final exercise was concluded and to undertake a comprehensive review of the mobility policy, in consultation with Member States and other stakeholders. In its report, it had suggested a number of elements that should be taken into account during that review.

80. The Advisory Committee's report contained a number of comments and recommendations on recruitment and staffing. While the Advisory Committee welcomed the reduction in the average time taken to fill vacancies from 174 to 162 days, it recommended against approval of the Secretary-General's proposal to reduce the period for advertising individual vacancies from 60 to 30 days, since other significant bottlenecks in the recruitment and staffing system should be addressed first and further consideration should be given to enhancing the transparency of the recruitment process. It therefore recommended, inter alia, that the Secretary-General should further clarify the envisaged role of the central review bodies in the proposed roster-based staffing approach and, before embarking on such an approach, should provide clearer and more detailed information on its proposed modalities, drawing on the lessons learned from the use of rosters within the Secretariat to date.

81. With reference to paragraph 57 of its report, the Advisory Committee wished to clarify that the Office of Human Resources Management had provided additional information in response to its request for an indication of the number of consultants and individuals initially hired under general temporary assistance who were subsequently recruited as United Nations staff. Since it had not had time to incorporate that information into its report, it requested that the relevant statistics should be provided to the General Assembly for its consideration of recruitment and staffing issues.

82. In considering the value of the national competitive examination as a recruitment tool, the Advisory Committee recommended that the shortcomings identified by the Board of Auditors, the Joint Inspection Unit and the Ombudsman in their respective reports should be addressed and that the Secretary-General should take measures to accelerate the recruitment of candidates who had passed the examination. Consideration should be given to broadening the scope of the national competitive examination to cover more posts than just those subject to geographical distribution; in that connection, the Assembly should consider requesting, for consideration at its sixty-fifth session, a feasibility study to determine whether such action would further strengthen the Organization's capacity for programme delivery.

83. The General Assembly should take note of the Secretary-General's report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (A/62/890), in relation to which the Advisory Committee's report contained various comments and observations. The Advisory Committee's report also contained comments regarding the Secretary-General's report on the practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and possible criminal behaviour (A/63/202). The Advisory Committee had commented in more detail on disciplinary issues in its report on investigations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/247 (A/63/492) and would address the issue of delegation of authority for disciplinary matters in the field in its forthcoming report on the administration of justice.

84. With regard to the three addenda to the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/63/310), concerning gratis personnel (A/63/310/Add.1), the employment of retirees (A/63/310/Add.2) and consultants and individual contractors (A/63/310/Add.3), the format of all three reports should be improved to focus on the analysis of trends rather than the presentation of raw data.

85. The Advisory Committee was concerned that the employment of retirees was becoming more widespread in the United Nations. The extension of staff members beyond the mandatory age of separation, pending recruitment of a replacement, could and should be avoided through rigorous succession planning and the issuance of vacancy announcements six months before the anticipated retirement. The employment of retirees in decision-making positions had, furthermore, been strongly discouraged by the General Assembly and should therefore be contemplated only in exceptional circumstances.

86. As for consultants and individual contractors, although in some instances it was impossible to find the necessary skills and expertise for a particular project within the Secretariat, greater use should be made of in-house capacity in a number of areas in which consultants were routinely hired. Since the

General Assembly had repeatedly expressed concern about the management of the recruitment process for consultants and individual contractors, the Secretary-General should be requested to adhere to existing guidelines on the selection and recruitment of consultants and individual contractors Secretariat-wide, and should make every effort to select consultants from the widest possible geographical base.

87. With regard to measures to improve the balance in the geographical distribution of staff in OHCHR (A/63/204), the Advisory Committee, while noting the steps taken by that Office to respond to the request contained in General Assembly resolution 62/236, believed that further progress was required.

88. Concerning the activities of the Ethics Office, the Advisory Committee noted the Secretary-General's efforts to consolidate a culture of ethics and integrity in the Secretariat; however, given the perceived confusion among staff about the work of the Ethics Office and its relationship to other entities providing advice and guidance, such as the Office of the Ombudsman, the Secretary-General should, in his next report on the topic, further clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Ethics Office. With regard to the suggestion in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/301) that the General Assembly might wish to encourage United Nations specialized agencies and other entities to participate actively in the Ethics Committee on a broad basis and through an open mechanism, the Advisory Committee believed that it was within the purview of the Secretary-General, as Chairman of CEB, to bring issues relating to system-wide coordination to the attention of its members. The General Assembly should therefore request the Secretary-General to discuss with the executive heads of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, within the framework of CEB, areas of possible cooperation on ethics-related matters.

89. **Mr. Kisambira** (President of the United Nations Staff Union) said that he welcomed the opportunity to present the views of the United Nations Staff Union on human resources management, as set out in the report on views expressed by the staff representatives of the United Nations Secretariat (A/C.5/63/3/Add.2). Those views, which related to matters of crucial importance to the staff and the Organization alike, were also shared by representatives of the Field Staff Union and the Staff Coordinating Council of the United Nations Office at Geneva and were presented with their full concurrence.

90. Nothing had changed since the last personnel year, even though different senior officials were at the helm of the Organization. The deficiencies in human resources management had been firmly institutionalized and the Organization apparently lacked the management competence to address the many challenges they presented. Vested interests continued to plague the reform of human resources management. One of the documents currently before the committee (A/C.5/63/3/Add.1) was presented as containing the views of Secretariat staff, but in fact it contained views of both management and staff representatives, some of whom were not even part of the Secretariat, as required by General Assembly resolution 35/213 and regulation 8.2 of the Staff Regulations. It thereby exemplified the chicanery surrounding the issue.

91. The mechanisms for staff-management engagement were either corrupt or nullified by the actions of the Administration. That was one of the main reasons why the United Nations Staff Union and the Staff Coordinating Council of the United Nations Office at Geneva had suspended their participation in the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC). Staff Union representatives had, in contrast, chosen to be frank and objective in fulfilling their staff representation obligations, even at the risk of their careers, because self-interest and acquiescence were undermining the Organization's future. In that connection, the permanent contract was of fundamental importance, since when staff were insulated from career vulnerabilities, they were empowered to speak up and do what was right for the Organization.

92. In view of those circumstances, the time had perhaps come to establish an independent entity to review the measures needed for human resources management reform and advise the General Assembly accordingly. The Staff Union stood ready to answer any questions that Committee members might have on the report (A/C.5/63/3/Add.2).

93. **Ms. Analena** (Vice-President, Staff-Management Coordination Committee), speaking on behalf of the staff of the Economic Commissions for Africa and for Latin America and the Caribbean; the Economic and Social Commissions for Asia and the Pacific and for Western Asia; the United Nations Offices at Nairobi and Vienna; the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia; the United Nations Children's Fund, the

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and United Nations University, said that those staff, working both at headquarters and in the field, brought aid to people in need, helped those living in conflict zones, supported the less privileged and ensured that the perpetrators of war crimes were brought to justice, often facing hardships and risks to their health and their lives as they served under the United Nations banner. They were the global face of the United Nations and should not be overlooked. The reforms of the United Nations and its human resources management systems should be viewed as a package. Each constituent element must be developed with a view to its effective fit within the whole, and the full and correct implementation of the whole package was vital to the success of the constituent elements. Such reforms would entail additional responsibilities for staff in many areas, which they were ready to assume; however, that readiness should not be met with further erosion of conditions of service.

94. For the reforms to succeed, the staff must be fully committed to them. Thus, the reforms themselves, and all the policies, procedures and practices intended to give effect to them, must be subject to concerted dialogue between representatives of the Secretary-General and staff representatives, working in a spirit of partnership and building trust through information-sharing, consultation and negotiation. The mechanisms for promoting that dialogue must be reviewed, their weaknesses identified, and efforts made to considerably strengthen their structure and operation.

95. With regard to the administration of justice, staff representatives were ready to give their continued support to the work of establishing a new system of justice that faithfully reflected the principles laid down in General Assembly resolution 61/261, including those described in its paragraph 4. In the light of those principles, all outstanding issues should be clarified as soon as possible, given the imminent introduction of the new system. Some issues that were fundamental to the system's functioning had not yet been adequately addressed, increasing the risks to the system and thus the significance of the remaining discussions.

96. Staff representatives acknowledged the complexity of the issues involved in negotiating the draft statutes of the United Nations Dispute Tribunal and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal. For example, since the scope of administrative decisions that could be contested and the implementation of which could be suspended remained unsettled, staff were concerned that the scope of the proposed new system of justice might be more limited than the current one. Concern was particularly acute with regard to appointments, promotions and terminations of staff members and the Committee was therefore urged to support the swift resolution of such issues, many of which had been flagged as outstanding in the draft statute of the United Nations Dispute Tribunal, and to a lesser extent that of the United Nations Appeals Tribunal, though other important issues were also left unsettled by those draft statutes. Further elaboration of the statutes' provisions, together with amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules and other implementing and guidance documents, might also be required; that further highlighted the need to resolve urgently all remaining ambiguities. Staff representatives were ready to work on that matter, for example in the context of the requested revitalization of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC) contact group on administration of justice. In addition, they looked forward to the opportunity to participate, as agreed, in the drafting of amendments to the Staff Rules. The issue of the employees covered by the Tribunal's jurisdiction was also a fundamental component of equality of access to the same standards of justice, and improvements in the area of contractual arrangements would be a step towards a fair and independent justice system for all. The SMCC contact group on administration of justice was still the most effective mechanism available for fulfilling the mandates of the General Assembly and bringing the new internal justice system into effect.

97. The staff were concerned that there were still many obstacles to mobility, including a lack of adequate support to staff with family responsibilities, difficulties with knowledge transfer, an absence of financial incentives and other issues related to work-life balance. They had also expressed concerns about continuity and institutional memory. Adequate incentives were required for the successful implementation of any mobility programme, linking mobility to career development in a meaningful way and offering a robust approach to achieving work-life balance. Suggestions included making improvements to host country agreements so that partners could work, taking steps to ensure that moves to duty stations perceived as less desirable were not a one-way ticket and introducing exchange programmes with other international organizations.

98. The mobility policy must be fair, transparent and consistently applied. All staff should be aware of how the system worked, what was expected of them and what they could expect from the Organization. A simple and dynamic system of appointments that gave priority to the appointment of staff subject to mobility, and the provision of adequate training and induction programmes before staff members moved to a new position, were critical. While such measures were admittedly difficult to implement, staff confidence in the mobility programme relied heavily on the Organization's taking meaningful steps to address the negative aspects of mobility. Recent attempts to implement a standardized approach through the managed reassignment programme had not achieved the intended results, since staff at larger duty stations had had the opportunity to move around within the duty station, while staff at other duty stations had been less able to do so. Since the other impediments to true mobility had not been addressed, the number of staff movements between duty stations had been limited. To date, the implementation of the mobility policy had raised concerns among managers as well as staff; it must therefore be carefully reviewed and discussed in depth by both staff and management in order to find real solutions before any new policy could be successfully launched.

99. If the United Nations was to perform its diverse and challenging global missions successfully, it must be able to recruit, retain and promote the most talented people from the widest possible geographical area. Many staff members, however, were concerned about the integrity of the staff selection system, particularly the role played by the central review bodies and the need for more robust checks and balances. The staff and management had agreed, within SMCC, on measures to ensure consistent and system-wide application of the administrative procedures for staff selection. It was essential to adopt best practices throughout the Organization and to provide relevant training at all duty stations.

100. Since transparency and objectivity were the two central principles that must govern a well-functioning staff selection system, the agreement reached in SMCC to provide staff with more feedback during the application and selection process was welcome. It had also been agreed that a more robust roster system, elimination of complex eligibility rules and the streamlined creation of vacancy announcements could be effective in accelerating the staff placement process. Those reforms must, however, meet the highest standards of transparency and fairness, in keeping with the core principles of the United Nations. In that connection, the staff reiterated their call for the central review bodies to have a more active and meaningful place in the selection system. Emphasizing the importance of reaching geographical and gender targets throughout the Organization at all levels of service, they applauded outreach efforts to identify suitable candidates from underrepresented Member States and the strict enforcement of guidelines to ensure gender balance. However, they remained concerned about the need to hold managers accountable for the proper application of staff selection rules.

101. As the main forum for staff-management relations, SMCC had faced considerable difficulties in recent years. After a general staff boycott between 2002 and 2006, most staff representative bodies had returned to SMCC, in order to ensure that organizational reforms were undertaken with the staff's input, and also because they enjoyed a respectful and professional relationship with their management counterparts. While discussions had not always been easy or consensual, the alternative of non-participation in SMCC did not serve the staff at large. The staff representatives in SMCC were committed to developing and defending their positions on important issues such as mobility, contractual arrangements, performance management and administration of justice. However, they understood the frustrations of those staff representatives who had not returned to SMCC, which, as a mechanism for good-faith consultation between management and staff, had a number of serious shortcomings. The revitalization of structures for staff representation and staff-management relations, including SMCC, was therefore essential. The staff representatives in SMCC were prepared to remain in dialogue with management, but not at any cost, since there would be little reason to do so if progress was not made on important issues, the staff were sidelined in decision-making and promises were not kept. It was time for United Nations reforms to be extended to staff-management relations, given that the current systems were outdated and in need of serious, professional review.

102. **Mr. Sutter** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey;

the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, welcomed the statements made by the President of the United Nations Staff Union and the Vice-President of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee and expressed the hope that such input would be a regular feature of the Committee's discussion of the topic.

103. The European Union fully supported the reform of human resources management and development at the United Nations: the staff were the Organization's most valuable asset. The aim of the reforms was to attract and retain high-calibre personnel. As the Secretary-General had said, the current contractual arrangements should be replaced and the conditions of service improved. The European Union would examine all the proposals put forward by the Secretary-General, while taking into account the contractual framework as defined by the International Civil Service Commission, as well as Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations. Gender parity was also of crucial importance.

104. Contractual arrangements should be simplified so as to make the system more transparent and easier to administer, thus improving staff morale. In the field, high vacancy and turnover rates were major obstacles to the smooth operation of missions, particularly at difficult duty stations. Priority should be given to tackling the causes of such problems, if peacekeeping operations and special political missions were to address the challenges that they faced.

105. Improved recruitment conditions and proper career development were the key to the retention of good staff. The European Union also strongly supported the principle of mobility and welcomed the increase in the Organization's mobility index from 10.8 per cent in 2002 to 27.6 per cent in 2007, as noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/63/208). He looked forward to the Secretary-General's further proposals on the issue.

106. The European Union was ready to engage in constructive consultations on the Advisory Committee's recommendations and to proceed with the implementation of the new system of contracts and conditions of service from 1 July 2009.

107. **Mr. Hunte** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the efficient delivery of United Nations mandates hinged on the quality of the staff and the availability of resources. The Group therefore supported all reform measures aimed at establishing a satisfied and dynamic workforce. Long-standing commitments by the General Assembly to improve human resources management should be honoured. It was therefore regrettable that the General Assembly had been unable to reach a consensus on reform during the sixty-second session. Although the Group had some reservations concerning the details of the Secretary-General's current proposals, it supported the general approach of creating better conditions of work and career prospects.

108. With regard to the streamlining of contractual arrangements, the Group concurred with many of the Advisory Committee's observations, particularly the need to address the issue of the termination of future continuing appointments and the unfeasibility of setting an artificial ceiling on the conversion of appointments. As for the harmonization of conditions of service, it shared the Advisory Committee's view that the impact of the Secretary-General's proposals concerning the Field Service category should have been clarified earlier and that the overall compensation of staff who were already serving should not be reduced. Moreover, Field Service staff should be on an equal footing with the staff of funds and programmes. Every Member State should commit itself to substantial reform of the way in which the United Nations managed its human resources, which were its most important asset. The Group was ready to assume the financial burden entailed, since it was committed to an efficient Organization equipped with well-prepared and skilful staff. It was also committed to the implementation of the new administration of justice system. The proposed enterprise resource planning system should be developed in conjunction with the new human resources policies.

109. It was a matter of concern that 65 per cent of staff were not represented on the Staff-Management Coordination Committee. Both parties should resume a constructive approach to relations between staff and management. Otherwise, no significant reform could take place.

110. The Secretary-General's report showed that current performance appraisal mechanisms were not rigorous or comprehensive enough. Much also remained to be done with regard to ensuring gender balance and equitable geographical distribution in the

recruitment process. Further details should be provided with regard to the proposed rosters of candidates that would help to accelerate the hiring of qualified personnel. There was, as the Advisory Committee had indicated, no need to reduce the period for advertising individual vacancies, although other ways of reducing the number of days needed to fill vacancies might be found. Similarly, the national competitive recruitment examination system, for all its merits, had some flaws, as highlighted in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/62/707). The issue should be further considered during the informal consultations.

111. A good mobility policy should improve the Organization's responsiveness. He endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal that mobility programmes should be suspended in their current format and that there should be a comprehensive review of the policy, in consultation with Member States and other stakeholders. Mobility should offer enough career advancement opportunities to make it worthwhile; it should not be used as a coercive measure. The views of the Joint Inspection Unit should be taken into account.

112. He expressed concern at the Organization's failure to meet equitable geographical and gender distribution goals, particularly in senior management positions. In future, retirements should be used as an opportunity to improve the Organization's international nature. Consultants, too, should be selected from the widest possible geographical base. At the same time, the use of consultants and private contractors should be restricted: greater use should be made of in-house expertise. The extensive employment of retirees suggested a lack of proper succession planning.

113. **Mr. Ramasamy** (Mauritius), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, expressed concern that the Secretary-General's report had not provided sufficient statistical data to substantiate the progress reported or provide benchmarks against which progress could be measured. The Group fully supported the course of action recommended in paragraph 34 of the Advisory Committee's report. Moreover, a comprehensive approach should have been adopted. As it was, the Secretary-General's report was too fragmented.

114. Mobility was essential to the creation of a more versatile and experienced workforce. The Group therefore took note of the Secretary-General's intentions and welcomed the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

115. The quality of human resources management depended on the system used to select personnel. The current selection system lacked credibility, particularly with regard to gender and geographical balance. The national competitive recruitment examination, which was intended to be a useful tool in that regard, had not been effectively used. The Office of Internal Oversight Services should conduct a survey to determine how far the examination had achieved those aims.

116. Lastly, he expressed concern regarding the continuing stalemate between United Nations staff and management. The staff were the Organization's greatest asset. Reform programmes should therefore be balanced with the needs of the staff.

117. **Mr. Taula** (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of Australia and Canada, said that, in order to recruit and retain high-quality staff from around the world, the United Nations needed modern human resource systems and practices. The current system was inefficient and administratively burdensome, and failures were often at their most serious where the conditions were the most challenging and the need greatest: in the field. United Nations staff were treated inconsistently and there were disincentives for working in the most difficult locations. As a result, turnover and vacancy rates were high and essential mandates were delivered poorly or not at all.

118. The Committee's negotiations should build on the discussions held in March 2008. The Secretary-General's proposal for a streamlined contractual regime, with three durations and one set of staff rules, would be simpler and fairer. It would also facilitate increased mobility by removing restrictions relating to various types of contract that were inherent in the current system. Mobility should remain an important feature of human resources management. The Organization should, however, avoid complicating the issue of contracts by combining it with other objectives that should be addressed separately.

119. The United Nations was becoming increasingly field-based. Conditions of service in the field should therefore be improved. A coherent framework of terms and conditions should be established, on the basis of the Committee's earlier discussions. Australia, Canada and New Zealand strongly supported efforts to reduce the time taken to recruit staff, with regard to both the

time for advertising specific vacancy announcements and other aspects of the process. It would be useful to have an update on information technology improvements in the area of human resources management.

120. There were a number of difficult issues to work through, including important work on the administration of justice. The three countries considered the reform proposals to be practical and meaningful. The Committee should aim to achieve a substantive outcome during the current session.

121. **Mr. Gürber** (Switzerland), speaking also on behalf of Liechtenstein, said that, although only modest progress had been made at the Committee's meetings in March 2008, the reform of human resources management was crucial, since it would improve the Organization's capacity to carry out its diverse mandates effectively. There should be an objective discussion on the streamlining of contractual arrangements, the harmonization of conditions of service, the proposed cadre of 2,500 civilian peacekeepers and the recruitment and staffing process.

122. The proposed new contractual arrangements offered job security and equal treatment for staff. The proposal to introduce a single set of staff rules was a sensible way of simplifying the contractual framework, reducing the administrative burden and enhancing transparency. Up to a point, Switzerland and Liechtenstein supported the harmonization of conditions of service. They would, however, carefully examine the details of proposals to that end. It might be possible to defer at least some of the more costly entitlements and benefits and allow time for the improvement expected to result from the streamlined contractual arrangements to take effect.

123. With regard to continuing appointments, Switzerland and Liechtenstein considered that conversions should not be automatic. Competition was needed to limit the number of conversions, which would make for greater efficiency. There should be clear and consistent criteria for conversions, objective performance assessments and a fair selection procedure. Simplicity, transparency and legal certainty were also important.

124. The Committee should look favourably on the proposals designed to reduce the time taken to fill vacancies and to ensure that the best candidates were selected. He expressed some doubt, however, about the roster-based approach. Roster management could become considerably more burdensome; moreover, it was doubtful that highly skilled candidates would be willing to wait months or even years before being recruited.

125. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that United Nations human resources management required a systematic and comprehensive approach. Many of the Advisory Committee's comments would enrich the informal consultations in that regard. Although some progress had been made, policies on staff mobility, evaluation, recruitment and training should be improved, with due regard for efficiency, transparency and the international nature of the Organization. The Rio Group regretted that the Staff Union and the Staff Coordinating Council of the United Nations Office at Geneva did not take part in the work of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee. The parties should put their differences aside and work together constructively. Much also remained to be done to improve geographical representation and gender balance, especially in senior posts.

126. A broad consensus had, after many years' consideration, been achieved with regard to the need to address the basic flaws in the Organization's human resources management. It was regrettable that the Committee had not been able to reach a decision on the issue in March 2008. At the current session the Committee should agree on substantial improvements in conditions of service, in the interest of recruiting highly qualified staff and reducing high turnover rates, especially in the field. The outcome of the consultations should reflect the international community's respect and gratitude for the valuable work done by United Nations staff.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.